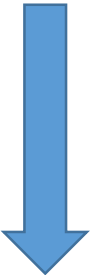


Framework for democracy in Finnish Local Government Act (same elements in counties)

Constitutional base

- 
- (1) The purpose of this Act is to establish the conditions in which, **in municipal activities, the self-government of the residents in a municipality can take place and opportunities can occur for the residents to participate and exert an influence.** A further purpose of the Act is to advance and facilitate the systematic nature and financial sustainability of municipal activities.
- (2) **Municipalities shall advance the well-being of their residents and the vitality of their respective areas and arrange services for their residents in a way that is financially, socially and environmentally sustainable.**

Municipalities shall have **a local council**, which shall be responsible for the municipality's activities and finances and shall exercise the municipality's power of decision.

The local council shall decide on:

- 1) **the municipal strategy;**

Local council groups and support of their activities

- (1) Local councillors may form local council groups for the purpose of conducting council business. A local council group may be established by even one individual councillor.

-> No parties in local level, in principle, but mostly national parties work there (has this been successful?)

Section 37

Municipal strategy

- (1) Each municipality shall have a municipal strategy in which the local council determines the long-term objectives for the municipality's activities and finances. The municipal strategy shall take into account:
 - 1) **advancement of the well-being of the municipality's residents;**
 - 2) the arrangement and provision of services;
 - 3) the service objectives laid down in acts on the functions of municipalities;
 - 4) ownership policy;
 - 5) personnel policy;
 - 6) **opportunities for the residents of the municipality to participate and exert an influence;**
 - 7) development of the living environment and vitality of the area.

Framework for direct democracy in Finnish Local Government Act (same to counties)

Chapter 5 Right of participation of municipality's residents

Section 20 Right to vote in local elections

Section 21 Right to vote in local referenda

Section 22 (175/2019)

Opportunities to participate and exert influence

Section 23 Right of initiative

Section 24 Local referenda

Section 25 Referendum initiatives

Section 26 Youth councils

Section 27 Older people's council

Section 28 Disability council

Section 29 Communications

Section 22 Opportunities to participate and exert influence

(1) **Municipal residents and service users shall have the right to participate in and influence the activities of the municipality. Local councils shall ensure that there are diverse and effective opportunities and methods for participation.**

(2) Participation and exerting influence can be furthered especially by:

- 1) arranging opportunities for **discussion and for views to be presented, and setting up local resident panels;**
- 2) **finding out the opinions** of residents and service users who are legal or long-term residents of the municipality before making decisions;
- 3) electing representatives of service users to municipal decision-making bodies;
- 4) **arranging opportunities to participate in the planning of the municipality's finances;**
- 5) **planning and developing services together with service users;**
- 6) **supporting independent planning and preparation of matters by residents, organisations and other corporate entities.**

Using new CoE Recommendation effectively:

- 1) Using word "deliberative democracy"?
- 2) How to guarantee that different forms of democracy are well known and their complementary role recognized?
- 3) Using word "participatory budgeting"?
- 4) More resolute use of resident panels (digitally, flexible etc)?
- 5) More discussing is needed in the society
- 6) More weighted selection of alternatives needed (alternative cost calculations)
- 7) More broad citizen/resident involvement is needed
- 8) To find the key services for efficient use of deliberation
- 9) Employee democracy?
- 10) Promoting health and wellbeing and green agenda?

Bonus things: definition of parties? More directly elected Mayors?

Vulnerable groups, some examples:

The Sami People:

three languages,

- the special truth commission working on the issues in 60s and 70s – not an easy task
- Services and education in native languages
- Own special "parliament" has had some difficulties in their work, most notable definition of who is Sami people and who is not

The Disabled:

- The right composition in councils of various types of disablement
- Sign language: shortage of interpreters in Swedish
- Some housing questions, taxation, mixed type of service houses
- Accessibility issues
- Good co-operation between ministeries
- County reform positive

The Young people:

- Losers of the COVID-19: "the lost generation" – to remote working of schools? - > not much statistics yet
- Difficulties to find their role in County reform – possible motivating viewpoint: security of the ordinary day
- Foreign children: challenges of language and culture
- Municipalities' emphasis on schools from 2023

Women

- UN reports and CoE note domestic violence
- Equality is always a challenge, in the Nordic Countries as well
- Shortage of labour affects negatively and positively

Elderly people

- Those areas which lose population
- County reform is good for them – perhaps too much influence?
- Loneliness
- Promoting wellbeing and health is important

Surprise vulnerable group: taxpayers!
(quite a lot citizens are of "special groups": who should protect the protector?)